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DEPARTMENT FOR OES/EGC (MOORE), EUR (BEH AND PARKER-BURNS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2019

TAGS: SENV ENRG TRGY LH

SUBJECT: LITHUANIA WELCOMES CLIMATE POLICY, BUT HOPES
ACTION WILL FOLLOW

REF: SECSTATE 97542

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Damian R. Leader for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Lithuanian government officials "appreciate the strong position the United States is taking right now" on climate change, but worry that discord in Congress might prevent the USG from meeting the goals set by the Administration. Without follow-through from the United States, they said, it would be much harder to convince other countries to take their own politically and economically difficult actions. The GOL, however, has a "great will to strengthen the climate-change agenda in Lithuania." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) We delivered reftel points to Laura Dzelzyte, the Environment Minister's special advisor on climate change, and Stasile Znutiene, head of the Climate Change Division in the Ministry of Environment, on September 30. They said they welcomed the importance being placed on climate issues by the United States, and the new direction the USG was taking in tackling climate change. American leadership, they said, is key to a worldwide solution to the problem. "If the United States of America will agree to the agreement negotiated in Copenhagen, other countries will, too," Znutiene said. "In EU-China negotiations, they always stress, 'Let's look to the United States'."

¶3. (C) But Dzelzyte said it was necessary to look beyond statements and goals. "It's not enough to have a nice proposal," she said. "How can you ensure it will be enforced? Can the United States assure that the Kyoto Protocol situation won't be repeated, especially to China and members of the Kyoto Protocol Climate Change Conference? These are very nice propositions, but we're afraid, considering your current problems with health legislation, that climate legislation will be delayed. How assured are we that it will happen? How quickly will you be able to ratify the agreement negotiated at Copenhagen?"

¶4. (C) Dzelzyte repeated that the GOL appreciated the leadership role the USG was assuming and the strong position it was taking on fighting climate change. That goal and commitment are shared by Lithuania's government, she said. "We have a great will to strengthen the climate-change agenda in Lithuania, even though it is not easy because of the financial crisis," she said. She cited President Grybauskaite's speech at UNGA as a public show of Lithuania's commitment to fighting climate change.

LEADER